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THE FAITH OF HONEST DOUBT

Practical Suggestions for Those Having Intellectual Difficulties Regarding the Christian Faith

BY

SHERWOOD EDDY

AUTHOR OF "FACING THE CRISIS," "THE NEW WORLD OF LABOR," "EVERYBODY'S WORLD," ETC.

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THE FAITH OF HONEST DOUBT

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THE FAITH OF HONEST DOUBT

PART I

"There lives more faith in honest doubt
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

Doubt is a doorway. It is a portal that may lead to a larger life. It often implies dissatisfaction with the cramped quarters of the past and a longing for new truth or for larger liberty. It frequently marks a natural transition from a second-hand tradition to a first-hand faith, from a borrowed creed to a personal conviction, from the youthful realm of authority to the reality of more mature experience. It leads from spiritual dependence to independence; from intellectual, moral, and religious childhood to manhood. But just because it is a doorway, it is a state both temporary and crucial. As Kant says, "Doubt can never be a permanent resting place for the reason; its function is transitional." It may lead either to the deeper darkness of settled unbelief or to the open sunshine of a larger and surer faith.

Almost every advance in philosophy, in science, or in religion began with a doubt of the old order and a dissatisfaction with things as they were. Modern philosophy dates from the doubt of Descartes and others, which challenged the arbitrary assumptions of scholastic philosophy and the artificial systems which had been reared by tradition. Modern science also was ushered in by a period of scepticism which challenged the old authority which had so long enthralled the human mind. So also in the realm of religion.

Almost every religious cult or practice was in its beginning the best and highest that its worshippers had known; but with the dawn of new light, this cult, if still blindly and stubbornly held, became a bar to progress. It had to be doubted and discarded if the new and higher light was to

be realized. Doubt is the doorway of escape by which the dead past has been left, whether of tradition or ecclesiasticism, of superstition or error.

The modern student cannot accept upon blind authority a medieval orthodoxy which, whatever its elements of truth or worth for a former generation, has not been tested and proved by himself. His whole training has taught him to prove all things, and to challenge all that would claim the allegiance of his faith. He has seen the disillusionment that followed the outworn creeds of medieval science, philosophy, and religion. He has had a glimpse at least of the freedom and larger life of modern times. Whatever his faith is to be, he feels he cannot take it second-hand from his parents or instructors but must find a faith of his own. At all costs he must begin at the bottom and build upon the solid rock of reality. But what is the rock of truth, and where is he to find it? He craves the same certainty in religion that he finds in the tangible realm of nature and of modern science. Naturally then he may turn to science for a method which shall guide him in his search for truth.

THE INDUCTIVE METHOD

The brilliant achievements of the nineteenth century were due largely to the scientific method of induction, of experiment, of appeal to experience. This method does not start with a theory or a fine-spun deduction and then seek to corroborate it by facts. It starts with an impartial facing of the facts one by one, and after patient study seeks to discover the general theory or law which is in accordance with the facts. If we analyze this inductive method, we shall find five elements involved in it.

First, there must be *observation,* or an honest facing of all the available facts.

Second, the formulation of an *hypothesis,* or the most hopeful working theory to account for the facts.

Third, *experiment,* to test the theory by the facts.

Fourth, there must be the *correction* of our theory not only by our own success and failures, but by comparison with the results of others. We must build upon the past; we must accept the tested and approved results of other scientists and correct our own theories by the findings of other workers in the laboratory.

Fifth, the inductive method is completed by *verification.* We take that to be true which is capable of repeated

verification; which not only satisfies us, but is also verified by all those who are competent and honest investigators. We appeal, however, only to competent judges. The fact that more than half the world does not believe that the earth moves around the sun does not disprove the fact, for a savage is not competent to judge of such matters. As a result of the application of this inductive method of science men have come to the great conclusion that nature is uniform, that it is reliable, that it responds to the honest investigator. And, on the other hand, men have found that *obedience is the condition of knowledge,* and only as the conditions are complied with and nature's laws obeyed, do we get the response which we desire.

Practically all the great achievements of modern science have been realized by the application of this inductive method of experiment. Columbus, the young student of natural science in the University of Pavia, observed certain facts which finally led him to the bold hypothesis that the earth was round. Twenty years of patient effort enabled him at last to make his great experiment. Against mutinous sailors and adverse winds he held upon his course till at last he sighted a new world. Correcting his hypothesis by his own voyages and those of other explorers, he was finally proved to be correct by the circumnavigation of the globe.

So the great Newton had observed the facts of gravitation, and formulated his hypothesis of the law of gravity. His first experiment failed, but corrected by the findings of his friends he was able finally to verify his hypothesis and publish it for the benefit of mankind.

By the same principle the great discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo were made and all alike proved that nature is reliable and that obedience is the condition of knowledge. In the same way Darwin observed certain facts of variation and natural selection. He formulated his great hypothesis of hope. After twenty years of labor, correcting his earlier theories by the results of others, he published his "Origin of Species" in 1859.

If we turn to the discoveries of applied science and invention, we find that they were made by the same method. Watt watched the steam of the tea kettle and slowly by patient experiment evolved the steam engine. Morse observed the electric spark, studied the law of the electric current, and had the faith to believe he could make it carry

a thought. Men said he was mad, but for twelve years he persevered with his experiments in the teeth of opposition and in great poverty. Having corrected his instrument, he submitted it to be tested by others. At last his instrument flashed the message and the world has been using it ever since. Bell tested and perfected his telephone by the same method. Becquerel took his piece of uranium and submitted it to an experiment by exposing it to a photographic plate. That stone had been waiting to speak and tell its secret for ages. Radium was thus discovered and has revolutionized modern scientific thought.

The method of all these men was the same: observation, hypothesis, experiment, correction, verification. All alike found that nature is reliable and that obedience is the condition of knowledge.

FAITH AND RELIGION

We must recognize the close analogy between science and religion in the discovery and verification of truth. In both spheres there is a strong reaction against attributing a monopoly to cold reason. We must recognize the place of imagination and faith as organs of scientific discovery in the formulation of scientific hypotheses. Lord Kelvin stated that he had never reasoned his way quite up to any one of his great discoveries. He brooded over the facts "until there came a moment when his mind took a life-or-death leap away out into the unknown. He felt in the very marrow of his being the conviction that the solution lay just there." Halting reason could neither discover nor demonstrate, but imagination, or intuition, or faith leaped out to lay hold of the reality which science could later describe and reason relate and explain.

The same is true in the spiritual realm where faith as intuition, or imagination, or experiment makes the leap beyond the material into the spiritual, beyond the little known into the unknown vast. The scientist, J. Arthur Thomson, thus concludes his "System of Animate Nature," "We hold it to be historically true that just as there is a science that knows Nature, so there is a Religion that knows God. . . . Happy, then, are those who have what Sir Thomas Browne called 'a glimpse of incomprehensibles and thoughts of things that thoughts but tenderly touch.' Shall we not seek to worship Him whom nature increasingly reveals, from whom all comes and by whom all lives?"

Let us now apply the scientific method to religion. Can an educated man have a rational faith, and a vital experience in religion today? Let us first ask, however, what we mean by faith and religion. Faith is not blind credulity or superstition. It may be conceived either as unverified conviction or as trust in a person. It is not opposed to reason but to sight, and we use it in all the relationships of life. Without faith there could be no organized commerce or business; there would be financial panic instead. Without faith there could be no science, if we did not believe in the reliability of nature and its laws. Every hypothesis and every scientific discovery is a step in faith, a venture into the unknown. For faith, whether in science or religion, means the same thing. "Faith is a scientific venture in action by which a man seeks to transform a reasonable probability, or something reported as fact by another person, into a practical certainty of his own personal experience." Faith, then, is a venture in action—an experiment.

In personal relationships, whether human or superhuman, faith is trust in a person, based on knowledge of character. Like friendship, it is a normal growth, natural and rational. Both Goethe and Carlyle hold that doubt of any kind can be removed only by action. Life reacts upon faith. Our faith is the product of our whole past life. It expresses the very essence of what we are. It is not some arbitrary thing, nor a mere casual opinion. "The pure in heart see God," not as an arbitrary reward, but in consequence of a necessary spiritual law. Purity sees, trusts, knows by experience. Faith is the assent of the whole man—mind, heart and will—to God. It is, according to the writer of Hebrews, "the proving of facts not seen." It is not credulity regarding subjective fancies, but the testing in experience of objective facts, and of unseen realities.

Doubt may be simply ignorance of God. Often we do not trust him because we do not know him.[1] As in human friendship we trust a friend as we come to know him, so in the divine relationship we trust God as we come to know him and fulfil the conditions of his friendship. The antidote for doubt is experience. And we live daily within reach of testing God and dispelling doubt.

And what do we mean by religion? Seneca's ancient

[1] As in the Authorized and Revised Versions pronouns referring to God and Jesus Christ are not printed in capitals in this pamphlet.

definition of religion was "to know God and imitate him." Kant's definition is "the recognition of all duties as divine commands." Rather, it is the whole life of man in his relations with the spiritual world. In its essence it is a vital relationship. It is such a relation to the source and ground of existence as shall enable me to become all I am capable of becoming. If it is true, it should fully develop and then fully satisfy my highest nature.

Now, if there is any spiritual ground or source of existence, if there is a God, we should expect to find him a reliable God, who would respond not only in the field of science or natural law, but also in religion. Here, too, we should expect to find that obedience is the condition of knowledge. But can the mind know that there is a God? Can the heart know that God is love? Can the will receive power to help one when fiercely tempted?

WHAT CAN I KNOW

Whatever my doubt, amidst the wreck of old superstitions, however great my scepticism, there are certain things of which I may be sure. First, *I know that I am. "Cogito, ergo sum"*—"I think, therefore I am." The mental process which attempts to disprove my existence only proves it. I may not know what I am, but I know that I am. I may not know what electricity is, but I can use it. We have knowledge enough for practical reason and for daily living.

And I know a second fact: *I know that there is a difference between right and wrong.* No student is sunk so low that he does not know that there is some difference between right and wrong. A moral monster no more disproves the conscience than an insane man disproves the reason. No man could maintain that it is right to murder his mother, rob his father, or wreck his own life.

And I know a third fact: that *there are imperative reasons for doing the right.* All history asserts it. My conscience confirms it. My experience has proved it. Ethics demands it. Religion assures it. Every man morally in earnest will admit that there are imperative reasons for doing the right.

And I know a fourth fact: *I know that thousands testify from personal experience that they have found God by doing right.* Thousands whose testimony I would accept in any court of law or on any other subject, thousands of educated men in every land, state that they have found God by obeying his laws.

And I know a fifth fact: *I know that I ought to follow my highest nature;* that I ought to do the right, *and to test this hypothesis of God* which has satisfied thousands of educated men. For if there be a God, and I refuse to make the experiment, then I am turning my back on possible light, on my own highest nature, on the hope of humanity, on my Maker and my God. One cannot prove with the reason alone that there is a God, but we may show that the burden of proof rests upon every man to test the hypothesis, to make the experiment, and to remember that obedience is the condition of knowledge. Faith is but a venture in action, rational and scientific. *The only contradiction is between an unscientific belief and an unbelieving science.* Science and religion do not contradict each other any more than astronomy and botany. The sun does not contradict the flower; they were made for each other. The flower turns its face to the sun to get its warmth and light. As Mr. Balfour says in his "Foundations of Belief," "Science does not disprove religion but rather gives a new and added argument for religion."

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Take the well-known testimony of Darwin. Though he earnestly maintains that his findings are not "irreligious," he says of himself:—

> "It may be truly said that I am like a man who has become colour-blind. . . . Up to the age of thirty poetry was a pleasure, also pictures and music. Now Shakespeare nauseates me and I have lost all taste for pictures and music. My mind has become a machine for grinding laws out of facts. Part of my brain is now atrophied. If I had it to do over again, I would read poetry, etc., once a week. A loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness and is injurious to the intellect and moral character."

In other words, he had not made the great experiment in religion, and he does not claim that he has a right to speak on this subject any more than he would have on astronomy or any other branch of knowledge which he had totally neglected. Bacon's familiar words are still true: "A little natural philosophy, and the first entrance into it, doth dispose the opinion to atheism, but on the other side, much natural philosophy and wading deep into it, will bring about men's minds to religion."

Sir Oliver Lodge writes: "The tendency of science, whatever it is, is not in an irreligious direction at the present time, but the realization of the unity of the cosmic scheme

tends to faith and not to unbelief or unfaith. We are beginning to realize that the whole scheme demands real sense, an organizer, a manager, a controller, accessible to prayer, able and willing to help." Stating his own faith, he says: "I believe in one Infinite and Eternal Being, a guiding and loving Father, in whom all things consist. I believe that the Divine Nature is specially revealed to man through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lived, and taught and suffered in Palestine 1900 years ago, and has since been worshipped by the Christian Church as the immortal Son of God, the Saviour of the world." The great Newton says: "I seem to be a little child picking up the pebbles on the seashore of eternity." No one can deny that multitudes of educated men have made the great experiment and have found God. Why should not you make the venture of faith? Will you not make the experiment and see if God will respond?

Romanes, the scientist, after years of agnosticism fought his way back to a rational faith. Writing of his new experience in his "Thoughts on Religion," he says: "Try the only experiment available—the experiment of faith. Do the doctrine, and if Christianity be true, the verification will come, not indeed mediately through any course of speculative reason, but immediately by spiritual intuition. . . . Such an experimental trial would seem to be the rational duty of a pure agnostic."

Here, then, we have a great underlying principle and condition of belief. If any man will do, he shall know. Obedience is the condition of knowledge. Moral response is the condition of spiritual vision. And conversely, if any man will not do, he shall not know. Disobedience to truth is the precursor of doubt, and sin a cause of unbelief. Every act of disobedience to truth and light, every sin, by however so little, dulls the conscience, darkens the mind, deadens the heart, weakens the will, affects the character. Professor James says: "When a resolve or a fine glow of feeling is allowed to evaporate without bearing practical fruit, it is worse than a chance lost; it works so as positively to hinder future resolutions and emotions from taking the normal path of discharge. The drunken Rip Van Winkle excuses himself by saying, 'I won't count this time.' Well, he may not count it, but it is being counted none the less. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out." By an inevitable psychological law the natural effect of sin is unbelief. And conversely, every obedience to truth, every

moral response to duty, quickens the conscience, clears the spiritual vision, strengthens the will, places us upon a higher vantage ground, and prepares us for the perception of fresh truth. Thus the pure in heart see God and come to know him.

As we proceed to speak of doubt and of the grounds of faith, we do not wish to discourage or discredit that earnest spirit of inquiry which seeks to prove all things, and hold only that which is true. We are not pleading for blind credulity. We have the fullest sympathy for honest questioning and fearless research. Descartes began by doubting all things, but it was in order to find the truth. He did not doubt for the sake of doubting, nor in order to cover up an inconsistent life and a guilty conscience. It was a questioning that led to faith founded on surer foundations, not a scepticism which led to settled unbelief.

Mr. L. P. Jacks in his "Religious Perplexities" helps us in solving our doubts by his bold grappling with the problem of evil and his frank admission of the seriousness of our difficulties. He writes in substance as follows: As Carlyle was never tired of repeating, the ultimate question which every man has to face and answer for himself is this: "Wilt thou be a hero or a coward?" There is a coward and a hero in the breast of every man. Religion is a power which develops the hero in the man at the expense of the coward. Thenceforward the man's reason becomes the organ of the new spirit that is in him, no longer fettered to the self-center, but mounting up with wings as an eagle. Faith is neither a substitute for reason nor an addition to it. Faith is nothing else than reason grown courageous—reason raised to its highest power, expanded to its widest vision.

There is such a thing as the will-to-disbelieve. It is impervious to all appeals. We can find grounds for doubting our own identity, for doubting the multiplication table, for doubting the fundamental axioms of thought—if we are determined to find them. God is not a product, but the author and living principle of the will-to-believe. However sceptically inclined a man may be, there comes a point where he suspends his will-to-disbelieve in favour of the proposition that Truth (and perhaps Beauty and Goodness also) is better than the opposite. He is not dismayed at finding himself in a universe which puts him under no compulsion to believe in God, Freedom, Duty and Immortality. He finds his own nature as hero exquisitely adapted to the nature

of the universe as dangerous—on that side the ringing challenge on this the joyous response; man and the universe engaged together as loyal confederates in the task of creating a better-than-what-is. On the surface of things there is discord, confusion and want of adaptation; but dig down, first to the center of the world, and then to the center of your own nature, and you will find a most wonderful correspondence, a most beautiful harmony, between the two—the world made for the hero and the hero made for the world. The only final mode of ascertaining whether or no such a God exists is by experiment, standing or falling by the issue, and resorting to the methods of argumentation only to confirm or elucidate the results so obtained. Christianity began in something that happened, in a deed that was done, in a life that was lived. Thus Mr. Jacks points the way to a practical solution of our difficulties. It is found not in a way of thought, but in a way of life.

This method of appeal to human experience was the method constantly used by Jesus. To him life is a unity and it is grounded in the moral will. There can be no separation of religion and morality; a man cannot be right with God who is wrong with man in his moral life. Moral obedience is the condition of spiritual knowledge. If any man will *do* he shall *know*. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak of myself."

The words show at once the cause of unbelief and the condition of faith. Doing is the condition of knowing, and a right life is the condition of right belief. Here is *the moral prerequisite of faith.* It is grounded not in the letter of a proof text of some authoritative book but in the very nature of the universe. Deep in the universal heart of life are the ultimates of the true, the good and the beautiful. The man who adjusts his life to these will discover the moral ground of the universe, the meaning of life and the end of his own being.

On my little radio I can "tune in" to a station that always furnishes the cheapest jazz, or I can adjust my instrument to the wave lengths of the higher harmonies and great messages of truth. I am discovering that life is flooded with truth, goodness and beauty for me if I am attuned to these realities; or it may be a dead silence or a jangling discord according to my own response. We make our own world, not by arbitrary subjective fancy, but by our adjustment to the

objective reality of a universe that is friendly to the good.

The licentious libertine or the depraved drunkard cannot appreciate Bach, or Raphael, or Jesus, or the character of a pure woman. He does not have the moral prerequisite of faith. The man who does not humbly obey the physical laws of the universe will not discover the secrets of science. And he who does not make the earnest response of the moral will, will not find the spiritual reality of life in the total harmony of the true, the good and the beautiful which is God.

All about us men are failing not merely for lack of clear thinking but for lack of right living. Men are not enough in tune with the spiritual to discover it; they are not pure enough in heart to see God; they are not enough morally in earnest to find him. The root cause is the maladjustment of the moral will to the will of God. In a word it is selfishness. It is sin.

We cannot forever sit on the fence, nor straddle the problem by a shallow agnosticism, as Kant reminds us, "Doubt can never be a permanent resting place for the reason; its function is transitional." The man morally in earnest is forced to face the question, "Shall I try the great experiment and follow Jesus' way of life, or—what is the alternative? To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Is there any positive moral alternative of promise? If not, shall we not try his way of life which has yielded such results in the lives of others?

Begin where you are and walk in the light that you already have. Strive to purify your own heart, seek to love your fellow men and you have entered the path that leads to God.

As Firdusi the Persian Poet says:

> "No one could tell me what my soul might be.
> I searched for God, and God eluded me.
> I sought my brother out, and found all three—
> My soul, my God, and all humanity."

The chief and abiding obstacles to faith have ever been and must ever remain moral. Jesus was right. It may not be true that a pure heart is the only condition for the vision of God but it is the first condition; and until that is met it is futile to seek God any other way. And until we come to realize that eternal law of life, we shall make no progress.

How could it be otherwise? If it be true that through this vast fabric of our human life there runs a Purpose which gives to all else its existence and its meaning, then

only those who share this Purpose can comprehend life's secrets, can apprehend him who is its Purposer. If at the very center of the universe there is the principle of love, then only those who look at it through the eyes of love can possibly see it aright. As surely as the wave-length of one's radio must be adjusted to the message to be received, so only he whose heart beats in unison with the heart of God himself can be sure of the heart beat of his Great Companion.

Look at the world through the eyes of God and you must see him in it. To have faith in God means to have faith in men. Look at men and women as he does—all men and women, the poor and the prodigal, the ignorant and the haughty, our neighbor and the foreigner—all of them as brothers of each other and brothers of yours—and you will find the Father of whom they are all children. Look at the world as he does—not as an arena for self-expression and self-development, not as a field on which you may hew out a social or intellectual or artistic career, but as a humanity to be served and redeemed; enlist your whole life in that great and eternal task in which his infinite love ceaselessly pours out its all; place love at the center of your spirit and sacrifice at the heart of your career, and you will find the abiding fellowship with him who is sacrificial love. Experience seems to show that there is no other way.

Have faith in God then is not an invitation to believe; nor is it a sentimental affirmation. It is a moral challenge, a challenge to be done once and for all with petty shams and petty prides, with intellectual prudery and moral turpitude and social extravagance, a challenge to see life as a struggle and to resolve to spend and be spent in it, a struggle that men and women and little children may have life and that the Kingdom of God on earth may come.

To those who accept the challenge God increasingly reveals himself. For Augustine was right, "He has made us for himself and our souls are restless until they find rest in him."

PART II. SPECIFIC DIFFICULTIES

We have considered the causes of doubt and the method by which a man may win his way to a rational faith and a personal, vital experience in religion. Let us now consider some of the specific difficulties of students today regarding the Bible, Jesus Christ and his significance, the existence and character of God and the problem of evil.

DOUBTS CONCERNING THE BIBLE

We need, do we not, some corrective of the individual judgment. The individual reason is limited. Our spiritual vision and moral perception are clouded and darkened by sin. Our reason is not infallible and unchangeable, but with our growth in knowledge and moral purity our views change, and we must admit that we have made mistakes in the past. Again, my reason is at variance with that of other men. Men wiser and purer than I differ from me. If, then, my own view of truth is not infallible, where may I turn for a corrective? Truth is often found at the intersection of conscience and tradition; at the point where my individual experience coincides with the collective experience of those who have followed the light and found it.

In the Bible we find the record of God's dealings with men and of men's search for God and their experience when they have found him. We should therefore recognize the purpose of this record. It is that other men, by complying with the same conditions and obeying the same laws, should find the same experience of God. The object of the record then is that we may have *life* and that we may have it more abundantly. The Bible was not given to teach us history, or geography, or any branch of science, but to teach the essential truth of religion and morality. It was not intended as a rule of astronomy and geology, but of faith and practice.

Though not for a moment suggesting that revelation is a mechanical process like dictation, yet, to illustrate one point alone, suppose I dictate a letter to a stenographer. My pur-

pose is to communicate a message to my friend. When the writer brings me the letter, suppose I find certain trifling mistakes in punctuation, spelling, or diction. I might destroy the letter, and compel him to write another; but even if I did so, he would still be fallible, and might make the same or other mistakes. As I look over the letter, however, I see that he has caught my meaning, and that my friend will get the message I intended. Therefore, I sign my name to the letter, thereby endorsing not so much the typewriting or punctuation or diction of the writer as the message and meaning I intended to convey. When my friend receives the letter, if he criticises the writing or punctuation, and does not see the good news or the message of love, he misses the whole point.

The above illustration is not intended to suggest a mechanical method of inspiration, but only that the reader, instead of looking merely for the human limitations, should ask the essential question whether the Bible does indeed contain the divine message of life for him. The Bible does claim to be a record of a revelation from God, and as such me may test it. Let us take it up as we would any scientific text-book, and study it by the inductive method. For illustration, suppose a class is beginning the study of chemistry. Let us suppose that the text-book is by the greatest authority on the subject. The teacher commends the book to the students, stating that he has tested the experiments himself, and that the preceding classes also have found the book reliable. The student should have enough faith in the author, the testimony of the teacher, and of those who have worked through the book in the laboratory, not to blindly assent to the whole but to try the experiments for himself one by one.

The student finds that the book contains certain great laws or principles, and various experiments which illustrate or demonstrate those laws. He begins with the first experiment. He adds the acid to the alkali, and for himself gets the salt or base. Now one thing he *knows*. Faith has been transformed by experiment into knowledge. And with increased confidence or faith he tries the second experiment. Thus, by experience doubt gives way to certainty.

But suppose a man fails in some experiment. He does not find the substance in solution which was supposed to be there. The other men in the laboratory have found it, the teacher assures him it is there, and the text-book states it

will be found if certain conditions are fulfilled. The student does not rashly conclude that the book is false, the teacher deluded, the other men all in error, or that the laws of nature have failed. He naturally concludes that he failed to fulfil some condition, and that the mistake was probably his own. He tries again, carefully fulfilling every condition, and now it works!

Now, let us take the Bible as a text-book, full of principles and experiments, of moral precepts and a promised experience, which will result upon the fulfilment of certain conditions. Every promise is an invitation to try an experiment with God. The authors claim to speak with authority upon morality and religion, upon matters of the soul and of God. Nineteen centuries of successive classes of men have been testing its truth. In every age multitudes have been transformed by it, and have testified that through its truth they have found peace, have had power over sin, hope for the future, and that through it they have come to know God. It is the Word of God, because it meets the need of the human heart, and through it thousands have entered into vital relationship with the living God.

And it is the word of man, for it was lived before it was written. Its truth had been tested. It had filtered through the world's best life for more than fifteen centuries. And its words will prove spirit and life to you, as to others, if it is tested, experienced, and reincarnated in your life. As the German poet, Heine, wrote, "I attribute my enlightenment entirely and simply to the reading of a book . . . an old, honest book . . . the Bible. . . . He who has lost his God can find him again in this book; and he who has never known him is here struck by the breath of the Divine Word." While John Locke wrote, "Study the Holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament. Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth for its matter." The poet, Coleridge, says "For more than a thousand years the Bible has gone hand in hand with civilization, science, law, in short, with moral and intellectual cultivation. I know the Bible is inspired, because it finds me at greater depths of my being than any other book."

The Psalmist says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." In parts of the Orient in former times they used to wear a small lamp on the toe of the

sandal. It threw light at least one step ahead. If a man stood still he might complain that the way was dark, and refuse to move. But if he took one step in the light, there was always light enough to take yet another, and the light advanced in proportion as he walked in what he already had. So it is with the divine light of truth. We know by doing, we learn by obeying.

Faith is an honest assent to what we believe on evidence to be true. It is a natural growth, as truth is transformed into life, as the will yields to what the mind believes and the conscience approves. The Bible may be tested by experiment; it may be proved by experience. "If any man willeth to do, he shall know."

DOUBTS CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST

Again, let us follow the inductive method. Let us make sure of facts first. If we would deal more with these, we would have less doubt. This was the method of Jesus. He asked men to come and get acquainted with him. He began at the base of the pyramid with his humanity, not at the apex of his divinity. Begin by reading through one Gospel with open mind. Do not *try* to believe anything. Facts ask no favors: moral truth has a self-evidencing power. Be honest, follow what you admit to be truth; and you will believe when you come to know the facts. If yours is merely an intellectual difficulty, daily intimacy with Jesus and the honest effort to follow his teaching will dispel doubt as light dispels the dark.

But the cause of persistent unbelief usually lies deeper. The root of the trouble is often not in the intellect. It is not that men do not know enough, for, "*knowing* God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their reasonings." It is often the heart that is wrong, for "Men *loved* the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil." But the final cause of persistent unbelief in spite of all evidence, even of the visible presence of Jesus, is just this: "Ye *will* not come unto me that ye may have life." No amount of evidence will convince a man whose will is set against God, or against light. If a man will not do, he shall not know.

A guileless Nathanael instantly recognized Christ. Faith for him was but the look of a pure heart into the face of his Master. A doubting Peter needed more evidence. But

Jesus gladly gave it. He walked and talked with him for two years, and then asked Peter, "Whom say ye that I am?" And with a faith founded on the rock of experience Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ." The Jews still asked for signs. After three years of life and teaching they would not be convinced. Jesus took them on their own ground, and showed them the cause of their stubborn doubt. "How *can* ye believe" when your life is set against God? "Ye *will* not come." And here in the field of the will he gave them this final challenge: "If any man *willeth* to do God's will, he shall know."

Set your will on God's side. Try to do what you believe to be his will, and *God will give you light as fast as you are willing to walk in it.* Two instances of men at Yale University who tested this principle will illustrate the two alternatives.

The first was Horace Bushnell, one of the strongest minds of the last generation. He honestly faced his doubts one day in this manner: "Is there no truth that I do believe? Yes, there is one, there is a distinction between right and wrong. Have I ever taken the principle of right for my law? Have I ever thrown myself out on the principle? No, I have not. Then, here is something for me to do. Here then I will begin. If there is a God, he is a right God. If I have lost him in wrong, perhaps I shall find him in right. Will he not help me, or perchance, even be discovered to me?" Speaking of his own experience in later years, he describes it as follows: "Now the decisive moment had come. I dropped on my knees and there I prayed to the dim God, asking for help that I might begin a right life. My soul was borne up into God's help. I rose. The whole sky was luminous about me. It was the morning, as it were, of a new eternity." As he took one step in the light, he saw from that advanced position far enough to take another step. As he obeyed the truth, and took the next step, God gave him light enough for yet another. Unconsciously he was willing to do God's will, though he did not at first know it as such. Step by step in personal experience he followed the light of truth, until he came to know a living God who answered prayer, a life-giving Saviour who saves from sin. And it was Bushnell who wrote "The Character of Jesus," one of the best short treatises on the divinity of Christ for men who are in doubt.

"Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
* * * * *
He fought his doubts and gathered strength;
He would not make his judgment blind;
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them; thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own."

The other man came from the same college. He stood with a friend one night when his life hung in the balance. "I do not believe in Christ. This faith is all subjective with you men," he said. His fellow-student made him the challenge: "Are you willing to give up the sin in which you admit you are living? If you are convinced that Jesus' way of life is the right way, will you follow him?" He hung his head and counted the cost. At last he said: "No; *I will not.* I will not give it up for him, nor for anyone." With a will set against God, his heart became hardened and his mind darkened. Doubt deepened into set unbelief. Within a few years he had run the downward course of lust and sin and death—a wrecked and wasted life. If a man will not do, he shall not know.

Whatever your past life or your present doubts, Jesus' principle still holds. Will you honestly put it to the test in experience? You have at least enough light to take the first step. You admit that there is a difference between right and wrong. You will admit that there are imperative reasons for doing the right. An honest effort to do the right will soon show you the need of some standard of right, some example or pattern or goal toward which to strive, and the need of a power greater than your own to enable you to follow that example. What is the highest truth, the most perfect moral standard, the most winsome personality, the most perfect example you know? I think you will admit it is Jesus Christ. If you do admit this, are you willing, in just so far as you see it to be the truth, to follow his teaching and example? If you are to follow him, you will need to know him; and if you are to get acquainted with him, you will need to go to the record of his life. If you are honest, you will be in earnest about this. Will you read through a single Gospel with open mind and apply the principle of Jesus? Before you have finished, if you will obey what you admit to be truth, you will find the beginning of a vital spiritual experience! Will you accept the challenge?

DOUBTS CONCERNING GOD[1]

If we were asked to prove the existence of God, we would have to admit that philosophy alone cannot absolutely prove anything. As Tennsyson says,

> "For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
> Nor yet disproven."

No single argument seems convincingly to prove the existence of God. Yet if I may speak personally, God is as real to me as my own existence, "a presence that is not to be put by," the One in whom I live and move and have my being, the one central certainty of my life. If I were pressed for evidence I would state that for myself I believe in God for three reasons. Taken together I find them a three-fold cord not easily broken.

First, I believe in God because of the demand of my entire nature and the evidence of the entire universe that cannot be explained without God.

Second. The God that my nature demands and of whom the universe gives evidence, I find increasingly revealed in human life and history through the great prophets of the race, culminating in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Third. The God that my nature demands and that human life reveals in the Jesus of history, I have come to know in joyous personal experience. And my own experience is confirmed and validated by that of thousands in every land and through succeeding centuries.[2]

Let me endeavor to state these as clearly and as simply as I can, avoiding the use of technical terms.

1. *My mind* demands an adequate cause for the solid fact of the universe as it is. I look out upon the world and everywhere see evidence of mind both in man and in nature. Thus, adequate to the whole rational universe, there must be a Mind as the cause of it, and that Mind I shall call God.

Supposing I pick up a daily newspaper. Can I believe

[1] From "Facing the Crisis," Chapter II.

[2] Thus Tolstoi in his "Confession" says, "I only lived at those times when I believed in God. I need only be aware of God to live; I need only to forget him or to disbelieve in him, to die. . . . To know God and to live is one and the same thing. . . . And the light did not again abandon one. . . . I returned to the belief that the chief and only aim of my life is to be better, i.e., to live in accord with that Will. . . . I returned to a belief in God, in moral perfecting, and in a tradition transmitting the meaning of life."—Aylmer Maude, "Life of Tolstoi," I, pp. 417-18.

that the paper made itself or that the type set itself, or that it is a fortuitous work of chance? No, if it brings a message to my mind, that can only be because there is a mind behind it, a mind that thought and made it. If the newspaper could not make itself, how then could the vast and ordered universe make itself or be the work of chance? I pluck a "little flower from the crannied wall" and with every thinking mind before me my thought is driven back to the great Mind which must be the cause of it, that has expressed itself in the thought and beauty of the flower and of the entire universe.

2. *My heart* cries out for comfort and companionship in its loneliness and longing. As life stretches on through suffering, sorrow, sickness, separation and the death of earthly loved ones, ultimately I crave a "Great Companion." I look out upon a world of human love, the love of the mother for her child, the love of the patriot, the hero, the martyr, the saint. I see the love of Christ upon the cross, as he cried, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." What is the source of this love? Is it from mud, from matter, from star dust, from "cosmic ether"? As Pascal says, "The heart has its reasons of which the reason knows nothing." It rises "like a man in wrath against the freezing reason's colder part." If there is such love in the universe it must be in the cause and heart of it. If love has been evolved in the effect, it must have been involved in the cause, and we are driven back with the men of twenty centuries of repeated Christian experience to a God of love, as we cry with Augustine of old, "Thou hast made us for Thyself and the heart is restless till it rests in Thee."

3. *My will* needs help. I look out on a wide world of power, power immanent in every electron and atom and in the incalculable force of the entire universe. I see not only evidence of power, but apparently also of purpose and of plan, for it is a cosmos, not a chaos, a universe, not a multiverse. But purpose and plan as we know them in experience are found only in connection with a personal will. Back in the heart of the universe there must be power, purpose and plan.

4. *My conscience* rises with the categorical imperative "I ought" or in old English "I owe." To what or to whom do I owe it? I look within at conscience and see a purpose that is apparently not my own, for I resist it and strive against it. It dominates and finally overcomes me. Whence this

purpose if not from a mighty Purposer that speaks in the universal and evolving conscience of the race? What is the meaning of this whisper of conscience, and why is the world in harmony with right?[1]

From conscience within I look out upon a world of men and upon a universe that seems to give evidence of a moral order. Whence this demand of conscience and of a moral order save in the moral goodness of God?

5. *My religious nature* most of all demands God. If religion is conceived subjectively as spiritual self-realization, experience shows that no man can fully develop his personality without it. No tribe or nation has yet been found without the beginnings of this universal, normal human capacity and experience. Such a book as Professor James' "Varieties of Religious Experience," drawn from a wide range of human life, leads us to the conclusion that religion is an objective reality and a valid experience. We may add to the history of nineteen Christian centuries the longer record of Judaism. We may support this by the experience of India which for some three thousand years has held the unbroken conviction of God as the great reality of life, so sure of him that it has never needed an argument to prove his existence. We may add the testimony of five thousand years of the religions of Egypt and of the ancient world, only to find that man always and everywhere is "incurably religious," that he prays "because he cannot help praying," because it is as natural and as inevitable as breathing. Has man's universal experience of religion and his main motive of progress been based upon an untruth?

Let us take now this five-fold demand of my mind for an adequate Cause, of my heart for a Great Companion, of my will for a mighty Power, of my conscience for one who is

[1] Erskine of Linlathen says: "When I attentively consider what is going on in my conscience, the chief thing forced on my notice is, that I find myself face to face with a purpose—not my own, for I am often conscious of resisting it, but which dominates me, and makes itself felt as ever present, as the very root and reason of my being. . . . This consciousness of a purpose concerning me that I should be a good man—right, true, and unselfish—is the first firm footing I have in the region of religious thought; for I cannot dissociate the idea of a purpose from that of a Purposer; and I cannot but regard his purpose toward me as the unmistakable indication of his own character. A righteous Being is at the helm if there is a moral purpose underlying the course of things." So Kant testifies: "Two things fill my soul with awe: the starry firmament above me and the moral law within me."

morally Good, and of my religious nature for a God answering to my need. My whole nature and the whole universe demands God.

If personality in man is found to consist of a loving, intelligent will, unified in self-consciousness; and if I see truth, beauty and goodness unified in an ordered universe, then I must conceive of God as an infinite thinker, lover, and willer, the all loving intelligent Will, a personal God, in whom the universe is unified and grounded.[1]

Secondly, the God that my whole nature and the universe demands and requires I find growingly revealed in human life, especially in the life and teaching of the prophets, finally culminating in the revelation of Jesus. In his simple life, in his teachings, in his unique consciousness, he seems ever to dwell immediately in the very presence of God, and this faith of his was contagious. He never argues about God, never labors to prove him. Rather, he teaches men how to find him for themselves. Actually as an historic fact, in his presence men found God. Yet this experience was not dependent upon his physical presence and throughout the nineteen centuries it has been capable of repeated verification.

Somehow through Jesus, historically and experimentally, we have been introduced into an utterly new conception and experience of God. We have passed into a realm of the certainty of experience that no labored argument, no cold syllogism of logic could give us. To philosophy God may be an hypothesis, a postulate, a cause, a first principle, an absolute; but sharing the experience of Jesus he becomes our Father.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD

Finally, the God that my nature demands and of whom the whole universe gives evidence, the God that is revealed in human history, in the prophets and in Jesus, I have found

[1] Bishop Gore in his "Belief in God" writes, "I cannot hold the conception of mind or of truth or of purpose or of righteousness except on the background of personality. . . . If personality is the highest known thing, must not God be at least that highest thing?"

Marcus Aurelius could write: "The world is either a welter . . . or a unity of order and providence. If the former, why do I care about anything else than how shall I at last become earth? But on the other alternative I feel reverence. I stand steadfast . . . I find heart in the power that disposes all."

in personal, vital experience, for God has become to me the one central certainty of life.

If the reader will pardon a very personal testimony, I desire to say a word as to the reality of God in my own experience. In 1897 I came to the darkest day in my life. I had miserably failed in my own character and in my service. I was discouraged, bitter, rebellious. Somehow I had missed the mark and lost the way in life. After a sleepless night, I cried to God as my Father to show me the way out. Then in a moment, without any special emotion or excitement, one simple word received in faith changed life forever. For twenty-seven years since that day God has been the abiding reality of my life and I have no fears for the future. And this was the word—"Anyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again but anyone who drinks the water I shall give him *will never thirst any more;* the water I shall give him will turn into a spring of water welling up to eternal life."[1] The waters of this earth, wealth, pleasure, power, ambition, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" do not satisfy, for the reason that man was made for higher things. But God does satisfy, for happiness is found in the harmonious exercise of function, in full correspondence with the ultimate environment of the soul, which is God.

I thought, how glorious that would be to "never thirst any more," but I could never hold out, I would forget and lose my grip as I had in the past. But then the thought came, could I trust, could I drink, could I live this way for one day, for I will never have to live but one day at a time. Yes, I said, I will try it. I will test the promise and begin to drink, living one day at a time by faith. I will endeavor to live upon God, to draw my life from him as the spiritual environment of the soul, as simply as I would drink, or eat, or breathe, in correspondence with the physical environment.

That day I began. Twenty-seven years have passed but the thirst of the former years has never come back—no, not for an hour! There has not been an hour of darkness or despair, and, I mean it literally, not an hour of discouragement. I have often failed him. I have never been satisfied with myself, or my service. I have often sinned. It would be sheer dishonesty to imply anything else. But he has never failed me. And he has kept his promise. He is my portion,

[1] John 4:14. Moffatt's translation.

my satisfaction, my life; for it is not what I am to him, but what he is to me that determines life.

And experimentally it is in the continuous present. We drink the well once for all, as it were (the Greek tense is in the aorist), but thenceforth we drink continuously of the inward spring. It does not say "Whosoever drank in the past," but "anyone who drinks" and keeps drinking, for just so long he "will *never* thirst *any more.*" This experience, or rather God himself, as revealed in Jesus, has become to me the perennial inward moral miracle, the central certainty, the daily joyous discovery of the great adventure of life. I have made an almost unbelievably poor response to this experience, but I can no more deny it or doubt God than I can doubt my own existence. Nearly thirty years have passed and that joy is undimmed. And before God, I lie not. One thing I know, *he satisfies.* And such an experience is possible for all, only varying in expression according to temperament and training. "If *any* man thirst let him come and drink."

The sum total of it all comes to this; that God is always and everywhere like Jesus. Were it otherwise,

> "The loving worm within its clod
> Were diviner than a loveless God."

Were it otherwise, Jesus with his sublime love upon the cross, praying, "Father forgive them," would be higher and more divine than God himself. But Jesus is a fact that must be accounted for. Our definition of "God" as the adequate cause underlying the world, must be interpreted by the highest not by the lowest. Are we to place Jesus above God in love, or must we enlarge our definition of God to take in the love of Jesus and all the good, the true and the beautiful in life?

We must account for the good in Jesus and the best in ourselves. In the end we must "accept as real that to which the best in us irresistibly points." There is that within us which we cannot deny without surrendering our moral integrity and ceasing to be ourselves. "We needs must love the highest when we see it," and we needs must believe the best within our own souls and in all life. We must live as though God were what our faith claims and let faith vindicate itself in experience.

Here is a three-fold evidence that cannot easily be broken. It is interwoven in reason, in history, in human experience.

This is why I believe in God; as the demand of my entire nature and of the universe; who is revealed in the prophets and in Jesus; and found in a personal experience capable of repeated verification. This God is *our* God. This God may be *your* God.

Many men in every age and in many lands with just your doubts and difficulties, or yet greater ones, have found their way to a satisfying and rational faith, in the glad certainty of a personal, vital experience. Are you willing to make the great experiment as they did and discover God for yourself?

"If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know."

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL[1]

Epicurus writing some twenty-two centuries ago well states the dilemma for all time: if God wishes to prevent evil but cannot, then he is impotent; if he could but will not, he is malevolent; if he has both the power and the will, whence then is evil?

If we were to state the answer in a sentence we should say, a good world must be a moral world; a moral world must be free; a free moral world must be one of gradual development under the discipline of suffering.

President King, summing up the conviction of many writers, states what he believes to be the six prerequisites of moral character: some genuine freedom of volition on man's part; some power of accomplishment in the direction of his volition; an imperfect developing environment; a sphere of laws; that men should be members one of another; and that there should be struggle against resistance.[2]

If you should say, with Omar Khayyam, that you would shatter to bits this sorry scheme of things entire, and then remold it nearer to the hearts' desire, what manner of world would you make? Take the six alternatives presented by the above prerequisites of moral character. If you had your own way, would you omit any one of them?

If we try to understand the possible purpose of suffering we can clear much of the ground by recognizing at the outset that, granted a loving God, personal immortality, and a moral meaning in life, all suffering is temporary and much of it is man-made, unnecessary and removable. Much of the

[1] Selections from "Facing the Crisis," Chapter III.

[2] Cf. H. C. King, "Fundamental Questions," p. 13, and "Theology and the Social Consciousness," pp. 30-32.

evil in the world cannot be explained away, but it can be fought away. It cannot be removed by philosophy but only by loving labor and sacrifice. Our great need is not the explanation of evil but the secret of moral mastery over it.

May not the suffering that cannot be removed as man-made and unnecessary, be resolved into three chief forms: disciplinary, remedial or redemptive? Some suffering is disciplinary, as a stimulus to man's development; some is remedial as a result of man's own sin; while some is redemptive, and when so recognized it may become voluntary and vicarious, borne for the reclaiming of men and the making of a better world.

Socrates calmly drinks the hemlock that Greece may be free. Telemachus springs into the arena in protest against the gladiatorial games and gladly yields his life that this evil may be ended. The mother nurses her sick child, takes the disease and loses her life for her offspring. The hero dies for his country, the martyr for his cause. But each such sacrifice marks a milestone of advance.

Finally Jesus appears as the one hope of mankind. His short life failed to win an adequate following, and his teaching, sublime as it was, was often uncomprehended, unappreciated or misunderstood, for the world was far below his standard. But what his life failed to win, the seeming defeat of his death achieved. Actually and historically out of this deepest evil in the world has there not come the world's greatest good?

The Jew looked from the baffling problem of evil and a world of injustice to the last judgment for the vindication of God. There finally good would be rewarded, sin would be punished, and evil destroyed. But as he stood beneath the cross of Christ, he who had vision saw a higher and a better way, not of punishment but of the divine sharing of our suffering, not evil destroyed but rather borne by love, overcome by it and converted to good. The cross was God's way not of annihilating evil in wrath but of turning the other cheek to it in long-suffering love. Christ's death, which seemed to cut short and frustrate his life purpose, finally proved to be the very means of accomplishing it. Thus through the ages one increasing purpose runs—a purpose of love, as creation's final law. And love facing a world in the making, an evolving, disciplinary, and still sinful world, *must suffer.*

It is thus in the cross of Christ that we see the final

meaning of suffering. It is here that we can see the very heart of God; for if God was in Christ then he is always and everywhere what Jesus was. Then a suffering Christ means a suffering God, and in all our afflictions he is afflicted with us. As much suffering as there is in the world is ever at the heart of God, borne and shared by him. All we suffer the Father's heart feels. In nature we see that God could do anything he would; in the cross we see that he would do anything he could. In nature we see his power; in the cross we see his love. Here is epitomized the whole meaning of suffering, the whole problem of evil. It is here that we learn the philosophy of life, that God works together into good all things for them that love him.

For us there is a depth of meaning in the reminder, "Christ also suffered."

Such a faith strengthens us in facing the world today. Without it in pessimism, doubt or agnosticism we cannot find firm footing for faith from which to wage victorious warfare against the giant evils that must be overcome, confident that the ultimate power of the universe is behind us. Thus in facing the crisis of his time to Jesus it was God's world and it was good. He sees this vast complex of life as the interplay of God's purpose with the conflicting and colliding wills of men. In it any circumstance may for the moment be good or ill, a pleasure or a pain. But granted a good God of infinite power, a developing moral personality in man, and the meaning of life revealed, realized and epitomized in Christ, then all contingencies are covered, all present evil may be a potential blessing, and all things work together for ultimate good.

THE FAITH OF A MODERN CHRISTIAN [1]

In conclusion the writer will endeavor to make a brief statement of his own belief. The term "modern Christian" is here used to denote one who seeks to find truth rather than to defend tradition; one who accepts the method of evolution discovered by modern science as the way of God's working in the natural world; one who adopts the principle of historical criticism, seeking by patient inductive study to ascertain fact at whatever cost; one who lives in the freedom of the spirit, not under the bondage of external compulsion, and who finds the touchstone of truth, the final seat of

[1] From "Forcing the Crisis," Chapter XXII.

authority, not in any external institution or record, but in God as revealed in Jesus, realized in personal experience.

By the creed of a modern Christian is meant not some imposed belief, not some second-hand tradition which one must repeat, not some barrier of prison bars beyond which one may not pass, but the glorious adventure and growing achievement of experience; the vital and enlarging grasp of life.

I. I BELIEVE IN GOD

1. I believe that *God is.*

Because of the total demand of my nature, and the demand of the universe for an adequate cause,

Because the God whom my nature demands I find revealed in Jesus Christ.

Because the God whom my nature demands and who is revealed in Jesus, I find verified and realized in experience.

2. I believe that *God is good.*

Because, although I see much evil in the world which at first sight apparently contradicts the good, I see growing evidence of a power "not ourselves that makes for righteousness," dimly in nature, more adequately revealed in the spiritual capacity of humanity, and finally in Jesus Christ. I find this belief in good answered by the deepest intuition of my soul, and the growing verification of Christian experience. I believe that God is love and that his infinite care embraces the wide universe and each individual.

3. I believe that *God is mighty.*

I believe that God is sovereign and all powerful, though self-limited by the free will of man. I believe that God is able, that he is faithful and that he effectively cares for the universe and for me.

I believe that God is the infinite, personal Spirit, who is the source and ground of all existence, who creates, sustains and guides the universe according to his purpose. Therefore I believe that the universe is friendly, and that all things will finally work together for ultimate good to those who are in harmony with God.

II. I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

1. I believe that *he is unique.*

Unique in the Bible, as the consummation of the Old Testament, the center of the Gospels, the culmination of the Epistles.

Unique in religion, as the fulfillment of all the fragmentary and broken aspirations of humanity.

Unique in all experience, as the satisfaction of life's deepest longings.

2. Unique in what *he was and is*

I believe that he is unique in his character, its strength, love, wisdom, purity; its balance and moral perfection; unique in its overwhelming impression and lasting influence, alike upon his contemporaries and upon all ages. I believe in his risen life, and presence and power.

3. Unique in what *he does.*

He brings God to man. He is our one supreme revelation of God. He brings God to man in his character, as God revealed in a human life; in his teachings, as living truth; and in our personal experience, in which God becomes to us the one great reality. Thus I find in Jesus, "The Likeness of the Unseen God," the revelation of the Father.

He brings man to God. By his example, as he shows the way to God; by his teaching, as he reveals the meaning of life; by sharing with us his experience of God, as the "Pioneer of Life," "the first-born of a great brotherhood."

But finally he brings men to God through his death upon the cross. I believe that the cross of Christ is the revelation in time and space of the infinite and eternal element of self-giving sacrifice which is the essential nature of God himself, as love. I believe that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," that in his cross we see the very suffering heart of God. I believe that in his death there is a revelation of the holy love of God, and of the sin of man, a moral influence which melts the heart and moves man to repentance, and finally, a manifestation of the all-loving Father suffering with and for his children.

4. Unique as the *Center of Life.*

I believe that his life is the revelation of the divine life of man, and of the human life of God. I believe that he was truly, normally and utterly human, and as such a normal example for us. I believe that I find in him true man and very God; my Saviour, my Lord and my Life.

I believe that all human experience, in philosophy, science, art, morality, and religion, is like an arch, broken and incomplete, which needs the single Keystone of Jesus Christ, as the supreme revelation of one infinite, loving, intelligent Will, to enable us to see life steadily, to see it whole, and finally to realize it as complete.

III. I BELIEVE IN MAN

1. I believe in man not only as he is, imperfect, but in the light of his divine origin and ideal end. I believe in him as potentially a son of God, who can share God's life as his fellow-worker; a son, redeemed in Christ as the head of a new humanity, a son with inalienable rights.

2. I believe that the individual man is of *infinite worth,* with undreamed latent capacities and possibilities; worth all the love of God, worth the sacrifice of Christ, worth the whole creation of which he is the crown.

3. I believe in a life abundant that includes the two poles of the individual and the social as coördinate and complementary. I believe in *personal* salvation, by which the individual accepts his relation to God as Father which gives him the glad assurance of sonship, and sends him out to win his brother.

I believe in *social* salvation through Christ, that includes, not only the transforming of the individual in all his relationships, but of his whole environment as well. To this end I believe that we must spiritualize and socialize the whole of life:

Society, that its members may become truly cooperative rather than selfishly competitive; recognizing their responsibilities rather than fighting for their individual rights; performing their functions rather than claiming their exclusive possessions; sharing their opportunities rather than appropriating special privileges;

Industry, that we may recognize that its end is public service rather than private profit; for a high idealism rather than a sordid materialism, with the ethical standards of a profession rather than under the lawless instincts of the jungle, based upon the Golden Rule rather than upon the rule of gold;

Work, as a divinely appointed discipline of character, a sacrament in which we share in the free creative activity of God, for the end of human development rather than material accumulation, to make man not a slave of a machine, but a fellow worker with God in the service of his fellow men;

Property, as stewardship rather than ownership, not as the absolute, independent and exclusive possession of the individual, but as a trust relative to the ownership of God and the rights of the community; with private property for

use, for all, rather than for power for the few over the dispossessed lives of the many.

IV. I BELIEVE IN THE MEANS OF LIFE

1. *I believe in the Bible.*

As a record of man's experience of God and of God's gradual revelation to man.

As a means of life, a springing fountain of living water, which has quenched my thirst and through which I have found Christ, God, life.

I believe that the Bible is a divinely inspired human record of the progressive revelation of God to man, culminating in Jesus Christ, giving us the highest and fullest spiritual knowledge of God and man. I believe that its inspiration is vital, not mechanical, that it is the record of lives inspired which in turn inspire us and lead us into the life of God; but not mechanically controlled so as to crush the full freedom of human expression.

2. *I believe in Prayer* as the very breath of the spiritual life, as religion in act, the highest activity of the human spirit.

I believe in prayer as actual, immediate, spiritual fellowship with God as our Father.

I believe in prayer as a means of asking and receiving the things which we need, which are according to his will, and as intercession for our fellow men.

3. *I believe in Service, Sacrifice, and Suffering:*

In service and human toil as God's divinely appointed means for the development and sharing of life.

In self-sacrifice, and in suffering rightly borne, as the great discipline and purifier of life. I believe that some suffering is disciplinary, to warn, instruct, and develop man; some is remedial, to purge him from sin; some suffering is redemptive and vicarious, the innocent suffering for the guilty in order to save.

4. *I believe in the Church.*

Because I believe in organization and coöperation in all realms of human endeavor, I believe in the Church as a divinely authorized human means for the realization of a Christian social order called the Kingdom of God on earth. Despite all its acknowledged human and historic imperfections, I believe in the ideal of the Church apostolic, catholic, visible and united. I believe not only in the spirit of unity, but in working, without sacrifice of principle, for the

corporate union of the shattered fragments of the Church of Christ.

I believe that the Church exists not primarily as the home of orthodoxy, or as a preparation for a future life; not as a spiritual circle of special privilege, or for the perpetuation of traditional forms and ceremonies, but for the realization of the life of God in the soul of man, and for coöperation in strenuous service for the application of the principles of Jesus to all realms of life and to all classes, races and nations of the world.

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